Fellowship in Prayer

"For a world united in prayer"

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell
in the uttermost parts of the sea—

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy
right hand shall hold me...

(Psalm 139:7-10)

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OUR PURPOSE

"To promote the practice of prayer among *all* religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind."

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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FROM DISASTER TO DELIVERANCE

Dr. W. J. Thompson

There is a story of a lone survivor of a shipwreck who managed to struggle on until he reached an uninhabited island. After a while he built a little hut, in which he placed his few precious possessions saved from the sinking ship. Day after day he prayed, asking God for deliverance, and also spent much time scanning the horizon for any vessel that might be passing that way. But the days passed without any hope of rescue, and the outlook seemed hopeless.

In utter desperation the man continued to pray for Divine deliverance. Then one day, on returning from a futile hunt for food, *he was horrified to find his tiny hut in flames*, and his few treasures all destroyed.

It seemed the worst had happened and he wondered what was the use of praying when even his little home burned up. The answer came next day—in the form of a ship!

"We saw your smoke signal," said the Captain. "Otherwise *we never would have known you were here.*" The very catastrophe that seemed to ruin all his hopes served as a 'smoke signal' to bring the answer to his prayers!

Remember this story when you are tempted to yield to despair because of some bitter disappointment or tragic experience.

They who walk in darkness meet the sunrise of the soul.

— Henry Van Dyke

EDITORIAL

WHAT WE LOOK FOR IN OUR CLERGY

Recently we had occasion to visit churches of various denominations in the course of work having to do with FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, several times when church members paused to speak to their minister after a service. What struck us forcibly was the thing that almost everyone really seeks in their religious leader and so rarely finds. What they look for, what they hunger and thirst for, is not what many ministers believe they seek. They do not look for scholarship and learning, nor for worldly wisdom and a knowledge of the times they live in. They can find these things, and more effectively, in many other areas, and from other sources. Nor do they want theological attainments and a knowledge of the scriptures. They look for spiritual power, radiance and purity; for spirituality, for the strength of holiness; for the wisdom and love that come to a man when he has had spiritual experience, when he not only knows about God—most of us in varying degrees know *about* God—but actually knows God, from direct experience.

How wonderful it would be if after a church service we could greet our religious leader in the certainty that he was a man of God, if we could see in his face and eyes the love for all humanity which the knowledge of God alone would give him, if from the touch of his hand and a few soft, intuitive words we could draw that special strength and inspiration that nothing else, and no other association in life, could give us.

Such men, even after a brief contact with them, can renew our flagging spirits and restore our faith in the spiritual life as we leave to face the world again, with all its challenges and doubts. They would be the bread for our souls that we so sorely need. They would be a living witness to the reality of God and the all-conquering power of prayer, for if God were not real and these men did not pray, never would they have achieved the character and quality they have. The very thought of them would refresh us and fill us with joy during the other days of the week. By thinking of them

with admiration and reverence we would gradually become like them and slowly begin to understand them a little more.

How rare are such men in our times, and how badly they are needed. For these people, and they alone, can talk to us of God and of spiritual things and make us believe them, and only they can tell us the purpose of life.

Many of us, most of us perhaps, think of Christ as a divine figure, the ideal of mankind through the ages. We are told to live like him, to be and act as he did. But how can we know what he was like if we do not know a Christ-like man to start with? In religion, the character of the teacher is everything, it is the only thing that convinces us. Lacking that, philosophy and instruction stimulate us for a while, but do not stay with us. Someone else with another philosophy may win us over. Character alone is constant and more powerful than the forces of ignorance and evil in all of us. Only he who is *like* Christ can show us the ideal in a living reality and inspire us to try to follow it, in our faltering ways, in the framework of our own lives.

Thus the great majority of the men who tell us to imitate Christ, be they priest or minister, are no closer to the Nazarene, in the conduct of their own lives and the development of their own personalities, than we are ourselves. This is the sad truth. It is why few sermons strike deep roots in us. We feel they do not come from someone who is as great as his subject matter.

Talk is easy. Most of us can talk quite well on spiritual matters, from a pulpit or a living room. When it comes to action, to actually living out religion in our lives, it is another matter altogether. This is not a criticism of the clergy as such. Most of them are good men. They are not to blame any more than the rest of us. The fault is in our times and in our approach to religious goals. We think that a knowledge of theology, a little familiarity with the scriptures, or subscribing to a few beliefs make a man religious. All this is talk, mere intellectual attainments. Most of us are experts in these fields. In the long run they count for nothing. They have their place, no doubt. But they cannot take us to God, they cannot transform our lives into lives

of spirituality and invulnerable inner power, they cannot make us know the Divine Reality.

Most religious leaders today cannot live the Christ life because they do not spend enough time in prayer and meditation, they do not undergo the necessary spiritual disciplines, they do not practice renunciation to a sufficient degree. In short, they do not stir up in themselves a longing for God and for spiritual experience. The result is that we get men who often have great charm and maturity, men of poise and intellect and social grace; but not holy men, not men who have risen above the bondage of opinion and desire, not men whose very presence can give us an absolute conviction of the reality of God and the deathlessness of the soul. What is more important than this? What sermon can give this to us? Only a living example can do it.

Mere goodness is not enough, admirable though it is. Our priests and ministers are all good men, but we are all good at times. Morality and ethics are not enough. They are moral, decent men. But so are the rest of us more often than not. Many people who believe in no God at all are good, moral and ethical people. Obviously these things are limited and not nearly the answer. What is the answer? Spiritual discipline, renunciation, consecrated lives; and prayer and meditation of a type whose only purpose is to contact the living God and make ourselves one with Him. Short of that, we have theology and ethics and though they are good in themselves they are only secondary things, almost anyone of us can get them if we try. The other thing, what we look for, long for, and so rarely meet with in our spiritual counsellor, is the real thing: the pearl of great price.

Clergymen of all kinds have too long been deceiving themselves with the thought that lectures on religion and articles about the scriptures make a man religious. We all know they do not. We all know the religious man—the man of spiritual power—when we see him, but we do not see him often in our churches. Our clergymen should re-examine themselves and drastically revise their estimates of the religious ideal. All of us should do the same.

THE LIFE OF APPRECIATION

Rev. Roy Wallace Thomas

The English naturalist, W. H. Hudson, who loved to write of birds and men, of flowers, sedges and forests, was unusually equipped as an observer. Of 226 species of birds he had observed during his youth in South America, twenty-six years afterward he wrote that he could clearly visualize 215! And of the 192 species whose cries and songs he had heard, he could recall the language of 154!

Yet he declared that such faculties are not "the main thing." The main thing, he asserted, is "the habit of seeing beauty everywhere and of viewing all beautiful things with appreciation." His habits of observation and appreciation kept his life marvelously enriched.

He was impelled not only by his intellectual curiosity, but also, in Edward Garnett's phrase, by "*the feeling* for beauty in nature." "In regard to wild Nature," Garnett adds, "we have first of all to learn to see, to observe, to admire." This we all may do, even if denied Hudson's gift of genius in observation and memory. And happy are we when we discover beauty so profoundly that we are stirred to appreciation. Appreciation, the full recognition of worth, the delight and satisfaction in values, is of the heart. Observation is of the mind.

Jesus let nothing of beauty escape him. He delighted in nature, but he found rarest beauty and greatest worth in men's souls. He had the feeling for beauty, for grandeur in men. By gazing deeply he discovered eternal worth in every individual. Distinctions of class, rank and caste, whether of blood or wealth, he found man-made and therefore unreal—not divine. He was in no respect like those whom he chided: "Having eyes, ye see not."

In the flowers of the field falsely regarded as common by the unseeing eye, he saw a wealth of beauty greater than the array of Solomon on his throne. In the eyes of the laughing, trustful child, freshly created by God and not yet biased by the crudities of men, Jesus saw the gate to eternity. He saw spiritual grandeur in the heart and hand of the Good Samaritan. He saw the superlative beauty of God-like mercy in the character of the father of the Prodigal, drawing the wastrel from the land of immoral destitution

to the heaven of renewal. When an anguished mother of a different race and religion, regarded as a dog by certain bigots in the land where Jesus grew up, came to him for help, he questioned her and exclaimed, "Great is thy faith!" — then freely healed her daughter.

What he saw in each child and each adult as children of God evoked his love and appreciation. He loved men for what they are and for the fulfillment of which they are capable. He taught them how to see deeply into life and find the light that can change a man while he looks. He revealed that the soul's most healing techniques are faith, prayer and love, as necessary for life as breathing is for the body.

In his practice, prayer was both a conscious and an unconscious exercise, just like breathing. How fateful life would be if we could exist only by conscious breathing! The way to fulfillment may be summed up in the one word, "commitment." Commitment is a continuous process. The effect is valid for time and eternity—a continuous, ineffable, joyful growth, shaped and sustained by God our Creator. The prayer of appreciation reaches its climax in the Psalmist's glad outburst, "Great is the Lord!"

There is power in beauty, whether physical or spiritual. As we know, the beauty of things may symbolize spiritual beauty. And "to admire," insisted Edward Garnett, is to experience "a change in heart." Mr. C. F. Andrews, in his book, WHAT I OWE TO CHRIST, relates how his life was saved when a boy by a vision of beauty from his mother's garden. At the age of six he almost lost his life from an illness that caused long months of pain. For months he lay at the point of death, nearly losing the desire to live. Then one morning he opened his eyes upon a flower that his mother had placed by his bed. The sight of this flower was the turning-point in his struggle for life. A symbol of his mother's love, its beauty touched him with a "rare joy," and reawakened the desire to live.

Great was the beauty that, later, this lad saw flower in the midst of adversity that befell his father's home. For years the family had been supported by the income from his mother's inheritance, which had enabled his father to preach without a salary. The father had named a close friend as trustee of the estate. One day word came that this friend and trustee had

embezzled the entire estate. In addition to the hardship from the loss of fortune was the terrible betrayal of trusted friendship. Yet that night this boy saw his father and mother kneel at their family altar and pray for God's compassion and forgiveness for the friend who had proved false. The grandeur of it was never erased from Andrews' memory.

The power of this influence was to make him great, for he, too, gave his life for others. He trained himself, and went to India to devote his energies in helping impoverished farmers increase the yield of their acres so as to save their starving families. He never lost his appreciation for his parents' Christlike heroism. He came to feel that the beauty of their heroism was a heritage far more valuable than material wealth. He knew that the beauty of their lives was supernal. It was rooted in what is best and deepest in the entire universe. »»»

FIAT

Plain and simple, here the pattern lies,
Simple as the blue of bending skies:
Beauty is and Beauty never dies.

Beauty is the Word of Truth expressed,
Beauty is the Father's Love professed;
Beauty is the Blessing and the Blessed.

Be still in your appointed place,
Be still and look on Beauty's Face;
Be still, receive thy Gift of Grace.

— Carla Patsuris

THE ROAD AHEAD IN RELIGION

Christianity, if it is to function significantly in the coming one-world community, must de-emphasize its claim to uniqueness in favor of a vital universalism.

Deane W. Ferm

It is a foregone conclusion that we mortals are rapidly approaching the time when we will have to live together in one world whether we like it or not. The natural and human barriers which have long separated man from man are crumbling and a one-world neighborhood is being created. We have no choice but to accept this fact. But what does it mean for the Christian faith which claims to be both unique and universal as it confronts other religions? Can the Christian faith maintain its uniqueness, its particularity, without losing its universal appeal? Can the church embrace all of mankind without losing its identity? These age-old questions are being asked with rising intensity in our new world...

We desperately need in this one-world era fresh insight into the Christian message. The traditional interpretations have had their innings and they have been found wanting. It may be that another Reformation has become a "tragic necessity," for it appears as though the road ahead in religion is a universal one and not a particular one. There are signs on the horizon which indicate this approach — signs which may very well be imprints of the hand of God. I shall mention five factors which seem to point in this direction.

First, the world's population is rapidly becoming diversified. We in the United States especially are becoming a conglomerate of race, social and economic strata, and religion. Integration, if slow in these areas, is also inevitable. Integration is faster on a college campus where students of differing social strata, racial backgrounds, and religious faiths are rooming together, eating and working and playing together. Students from overseas are coming in greater numbers to our campuses and they are bringing with them a witness to non-Christian religions....

What such one-worldness is doing and will do in even greater degree is to break down the man-made barriers of divisiveness, misunder-

standing and intolerance which separate us. We will recognize good qualities in other persons and realize that the divine light must shine in their faiths and traditions. Our claims to 'chosenness' and 'uniqueness' in our religion will melt before the facts of human experience. The walls will come tumbling down....

Second, this tumbling down of the walls will lead to a rebuilding and 'reconception of religion', to use William Ernest Hocking's phrase. This is being done already—especially among the laity. It will be done even more so in the future. When persons of diverse religious faiths and racial backgrounds meet together in community and even in religious gatherings, they do not claim superiority for their race or religion. If they did so, they would be considered fanatics. Rather, the universal elements that are held in common come to the fore....This does not mean that we will eliminate the particular elements of our religion—its historical traditions, its ceremonies, its dogmas. We cannot be religious in a vacuum. Religions, like flowers, need roots. But the roots of all religions are nourished by the same life-giving and life-sustaining elements. We will continue to speak in terms of our own background, but we will put first things first, as we are hopefully beginning to do now...

To be sure, the popular expositors of the particularity theme in Christianity today will accuse the universalist of watering down the true faith. The universalist can only reply that although he himself may find the love of God and neighbor best revealed in Christ, he must allow his neighbor to find that same love in his experience and his traditions. For if God be truly a God of love he will seek for a loving relationship with all of his children regardless of the historical situation in which they have been reared.

Third, in the days ahead people will think for themselves more when choosing their religious faith. From the cradle to the grave we are encouraged to think for ourselves. We are told that this is the chief mark of an educated person. This emphasis on independent thought will lead to the breakdown of external authority in religion as it has in other areas of human life. People will 'pick and choose' their own religion..

More and more people today want to think for themselves in religion. This will lead them to examine the claims of the various faiths and to

stress those things that really count. My several years of experience in working with college students have led me to the conclusion that many of them have left the church because the church has been too insistent on the exclusiveness of her own revelation-claim and has dogmatically closed the door to the shining stars of other traditions.

Fourth, the road ahead in religion will be accomplished largely through the efforts of the laity. The clergy has often had its vision narrowed through extensive theological training. Ministers often preach and defend concepts of dogma that have little relevance any more to the man in the pew... Cooperation will come from the grassroots, from the experiences of human beings of differing religious backgrounds as they rub elbows with each other in daily contact...

The fifth and final factor is time. Time has a way of blurring man-made distinctions. It has a therapeutic power. In religion this usually means the gradual dying out of the historical, particularistic elements that have divided men and the coming to the fore of the universal teachings common to all men. This can be noted, for example, in the founders of the religions. The founder of Hinduism has already been lost in antiquity, but his teachings go on. The founder of Buddhism is shrouded in legend, but his message continues. Christianity and Islam, the younger major religions, continue to stress the particularistic elements of their founders despite the protestations of the founders.— "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone." *(Mark 10:18)*...

This is a time for prophets, not priests. The priest is a conservative who looks to the past for his answers. His stress is on particularity and tradition. He sees himself as the guardian of that faith 'once and for all' delivered to the saints. He has behind him the prestige of church authority and the following of the people who try to keep in step with him because it seems the right thing to do.

The prophet is the liberal who looks to the future for his answers. His emphasis is on present experience. He sees himself as a searcher for the pattern of divinity inherent in all creation. His way is not popular. It is a lonely one. He has to blaze new trails in fresh areas.

This is a time for prophets. Moses was a prophet who re-

nounced the popular polytheism of his day and worshiped the one true God. Gautama Buddha was a prophet who became lost in a decaying Hinduism and searched for a fresh solution to the age-old problem of human suffering in terms of his own experience. Jesus was a prophet who opposed the sterile orthodoxy of his day with a daring new interpretation of the law. Muhammad was a prophet who bucked the polytheism and immorality of his tribe and proclaimed the one true God. Martin Luther was a prophet who tried the old, established ways and found them wanting.

The road ahead in religion is not an easy one. Yet it is an inevitable one.... Philip Ashby in his book, THE CONFLICT OF RELIGIONS (Scribner's, 1955), states the following thesis:

> *The world religions are confronted today by two alternatives — continued conflict between themselves in which they all shall suffer, or concrete attempts to come to an understanding and appreciation of each other from which all shall benefit. Those who are convinced that the nature of their religion offers no choice but continued conflict must be prepared for the possibility that not only their own religious faith, but many other values, will disappear as a result of their refusal to join forces with other religiously-minded men. Continued conflict between the religions will leave a divided religious world weak before the onslaughts of non-religious forces.* (page 192)

The road ahead in religion will have its detours and its roadblocks. It will meet with resistance, partly by those who want no road at all, and partly by those who insist on determining the route after their own particularistic fashion. But it has a way of shaping itself in terms of the experiences of men as they live together and learn to know and love each other. It will continue to march on and on, as it seeks to unite men of all traditions in that common destiny which God wills for all of his children. «««

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WHEN YOU CANNOT PRAY

Mildred Long

A beautiful young mother sat with me the other day and said, "I am going through a period of darkness. I can't even pray. What shall I do?"

This recalled to my mind the days of my similar experience—darkness and struggle, unrelieved by the light of joy. I recalled also that it has been said that all seeking souls and all saints have lived through these experiences and come out on the bright side of an unshakable faith.

This walking through the "valley of the shadow" is common to all men. It is intrinsic in our world, in our groping and seeking to know God. Elijah went through the dark valley after a great spiritual victory. Jeremiah experienced his miry dungeon in physical reality. But this teaches us that the spiritual dungeon is also a reality.

Read the lives of saints and prophets and you will find you walk in good company when your pathway leads you through the abyss of darkness and the morass of temporary separation from your God. These are necessary disciplines for a permanent and well-established faith, — even as the winner of a race must practice jumping many hurdles before he comes home with the trophy.

Having accepted the fact that we are not being punished or singled out for special trials, let us consider another truth. These periods of darkness are much like the clouds that hide the sun. On dark days we do not lament that the sun has gone out. We know that clouds are ephemeral. Tomorrow the sun will shine again. The same is true of this spiritual interlude of barrenness, lassitude, or despair. "Let nothing disturb you," said St. Teresa, "all things are passing."

"All thing are passing." But God never changes. He is the "same, yesterday, today, and forever." Brighter than the sun, more dependable than the coming of dawn, invincible, all-loving, eternal. In this hour of darkness God has not forsaken you. He has not withdrawn His hand nor become insensible to your need and your heart's cry.

God has made you. The very life in your body, the power to think, to speak, to move, are manifestations of His life, His power, His presence. If He should withdraw His life from you for one instant, you would die. If your soul could

be separated from God for one moment, it would be annihilation. God *is* your life, your all. You are in Him; He is in you, a union indestructible, constant, without end, final and irrevocable. Having made our own conscious connection and union with God through faith, acceptance, and devotion, *nothing* can ever separate us from God.

What then is this seeming darkness and separation? Whence comes it? What do we do about it?

This is a matter the new psychology has helped us to understand. There are areas of darkness in our mortal consciousness, deep wells of uncleansed emotions, bitter memories of the past rising up like volcanic fumes from some inner festering sore. These cloud our vision, dim our spiritual sensitivity and leave us confused, blinded, numb. Until these inner depths of grief or guilt have been purified by more and more of Divine presence and love; until all are healed, we can look for dark days. These *can be healed*. God's Power is available for our complete redemption. Our salvation is not complete until the emotions and deep lying motives and purposes are all cleansed and made new. This process is part of our spiritual unfolding.

And what do we do? We do what the Psalmist so often told us to do. First we "walk through" the valley of darkness. We do not sit down and bemoan our fate. We do not wallow in our despair. We get up and walk. With determination, with patience, with faith, without concern, we walk, we perform all our daily tasks. We do just what we do on a cloudy day—adjust our affairs to the weather.

Furthermore we cling to God although we cannot feel Him or see Him. We say with the Psalmist, "Oh God, Thou art my God." "My soul, wait thou only upon God. He *only* is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved." "There is none other beside Thee."

With this kind of thinking and doing we shall soon usher in a cloudless day and God again will be real to us. His new revelations will compensate for all the darkness.

"He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever." And no man, no condition, no feeling "shall ever pluck you out of the Father's hand."

This earth is not your home. You are a stranger here. Your home is the Eternal. You are here as a traveller in a desert.

— T. L. Vaswani.

A VISION OF RELIG

Francis

God has spoken to man in many ways.

In human speech he has addressed humanity through the great teachers—the Buddha, the Christ, Krishna, Shankaracharya. The accents of his voice sound forth in the prophets, the teachers, the dreamers, the philosophers.

To the artist he has appeared in the varied forms of nature—the outer sheath of an inner Beauty.

To the mathematician he has manifested himself in numbers and symbols.

To the scientist he has made himself known by the laws that govern the cosmos.

To the musician he has revealed himself in the solemn wonder of tone.

To the mystic he has flamed forth as a splendor hidden in the recesses of the soul.

Thus the vision of God has already come to many, and the sound of his voice has echoed and re-echoed across the planet.

Interpreted in this fashion, religion expands to include every upward thrust of human energy toward the Source of Light, Love, and Power.

This vision has unfolded sequentially through the ages. Each messenger has helped build the great Temple that is large enough to contain the entire human race. Each has built in his own fashion: one erecting a spire; another, an arch; a third, a mighty dome.

That structure exists because of the struggles, strivings, sacrifices, and aspirations of great souls in all parts of the world. The Temple of Humanity stands. It is but necessary for the human race to perceive it; for it bears the stars in its vault, the sun as a focal point of light, the earth as its foundation.

The revelations of the past have given man a glimpse of the radiance that is called God, a dawning understanding of the Intention that majestically whirls the planets in their courses. Not by opposing all previous realizations is that insight reached, but rather by setting them together in a single synthetic mosaic.

The rivers of past revelations all flow into a central stream.

The coming world religion should gather up the precious tides of spiritual endeavour in one great onward sweep. Thus will the flowing waters of the past flow on toward a triumphant future.

The compelling sense that

ON IN THE NEW AGE

Merchant

God is law found expression in Moses; that he is love, in the Christ. It will also be seen that he is the surging Will-to-Good that moulds and shapes the worlds of space as they pass along the grooves of Time. Then power released by man will be understood as a microcosmic expression of a macrocosmic splendor.

In human lives that impelling Will-to-Good, the Directed Intention governing the world evolutionary process will be manifested as good-will, and the result towards which it flows—right human relations. Between man and man, nation and nation, humanity and the lower kingdoms, humanity and the hierarchy of lives above, the integrating line will be drawn.

Supplication will give place to invocation. The little will of man will set itself at one with the mighty will to serve.

A rapidly shrinking globe demands the integrating power of a world religion.

A world religion means a world conscience.

When creative values are honored in every quarter of the globe, the hate that springs from difference will fade. The narrow circle of doctrine and dogma will be broken. The justification of inhumanity to those who worship God in a slightly different form will cease.

The Buddha gave us compassionate understanding; the Christ, love; Moses, law; Lao Tze, the all-embracing Tao*; the Sufis*, the poetry of aspiration; Plato, the love of Wisdom.

Are we prepared for tomorrow's revelation?

Must the Future hammer at our doors and crush crystallized forms before its message is accepted? Must men insist that the creative forces of the coming time bring catastrophe instead of benediction?

Or can mankind achieve a creative response to the inflowing tide of dynamic energy?

The days to come will spell out the answers to these questions.

The mighty blasts of the hydrogen bomb are symbolic of the new energies that have been unleashed—energies that will surely change the form and structure of the world we know.

These outer explosions are matched by stirrings in the depths of the psyche and point to a new day for mankind.

Dawn glimmers on the far horizons of the world.

**Tao: "the Way." Sufis: the mystics of Islam.* (Ed.)

SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

Swami Ritajananda

Spiritual enlightenment may be defined as the goal of religion. In all the great movements in religion, the reformations, the developments of new cults and the formation of new creeds, there has always been someone who came as a prophet or messenger of God. Sometimes he expressed his message openly, sometimes he gave it to a few chosen and intimate followers. When he made a deep impression on people by his life and actions, and convinced them that his message had a special value, they came to adore him and accepted him as the leader in their religious life. Not all prophets manifested a desire to go around rousing the world, but they all had the power to generate individual groups and to give them a new, inspiring faith in spiritual ideals.

History shows that the core of religion is often related to higher values and that it demands great sacrifices. On the other hand, there is the worldly life and human nature itself, which tend to keep humanity busy with things of the world and which make immediate objects more attractive than the rewards of virtue or piety. Consequently, no society for centuries has ever held firmly and closely to any religious ideal. All high ideals are seen, in the course of time, to have been compromised to worldly situations. In modern times the outer forms of religion have assumed greater importance than the inner substance, for these are easier to hold to. New interpretations have appeared explaining the truths or teachings of the prophets to suit the times. Scriptures have been intellectualized to a great extent and serve as a diversion rather than for spiritual inspiration. If they fail to keep alive an interest in higher values, it is because there are few men and women who live up to them and exhibit in their lives the results of following them.

With our rapid advance in scientific knowledge, we have learned to look at the world purely from the level of intellect. The discoveries of man's inner nature, his conditioned behavior pattern, blood chemistry, mental functions, etc., have made the study of man more and more challenging. Investigation of the complicated activity of the brain has made us feel that we are living in a "brave new world" which we can shape and alter

according to our needs.

Thus the modern world has created a fairy-land, where everything is fascinating, and there is hardly any time to look for anything beyond the sense perceptions. Our way of thinking, also, has become altered by these conditions, so that we are unable to see eye to eye with the older approaches. One main defect in this new orientation is that man is not becoming stronger, but weaker. With cars produced in large numbers, we are slowly becoming less capable of using our legs. When machinery replaces manual labor, the hands lose their flexibility and usefulness. In the same manner, when we seek comfort and pleasure we are weakened. Like a rocket we are all brilliant and radiant, shine for a while, and fade away.

Religion has never paid much attention to success in these material fields. The great teachers felt it was harmful for spiritual development to become involved in worldly affairs because, being fascinated by the wonders one discovers and creates, one is prone to neglect the spirit in the process. Consequently they all said: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and to forget his soul?" They made a great distinction between the realm of the spirit and the world. To follow them is to give up the world and attain the inner, spiritual life. The same is true even to this day.

We shall examine this question: What is it that people seek in religion and what is the knowledge they get, which is said to be the religious ideal?

Since the path itself is different from the path of the world, the scenes that come before us are also different. For example, while walking over level ground, one gets a view of the surrounding country which is not identical with the view one gets when one climbs a mountain. To a person who has never climbed a mountain, the view of the landscape from there is unintelligible and impossible to believe. In the same manner supersensory experiences are difficult to explain to a person who has never had one. Often the extraordinary perceptions of saints and mystics do not belong to normal life. This type of knowledge cannot be shared directly, but one can be guided and directed so that he or she is able to get it personally from within. All of us have to seek it and with persistent effort to find it for ourselves.

Not by verbal knowledge nor

through inference does one realize it, but by direct and immediate experience. Texts supporting this can be gathered from the words of many saints and sages in all religions. The purpose is to give us a conviction that Spiritual Enlightenment is a reality, and a possibility for all people.

Buddha refers to this as Nirvana, which is equivalent to Salvation, or the goal of religion. But one has to achieve it by one's own efforts. When the mind is free from cravings, Buddha says, one realizes that he has attained release. Being a deep mystic experience, it influences our intellectual and emotional nature. One of its characteristics is said to be of the nature of bliss, although even this word is hard to explain, since we often mistakenly identify bliss with happiness.

Certain texts refer to this higher experience as mystical, as an ecstasy, etc., but these terms are inadequate and perhaps even confusing. Rational thinkers hearing such terms brush them aside, saying: "If the purpose of religion is to go into a state of joy, a forgetfulness of this world of sorrows and enter a world of dreams, it can be done without austerities and disciplines. One can easily induce such states by chemical means. We can dream of heavens and all the joys of paradise merely by inhaling certain drugs."

The foremost point we have to remember is that the state of bliss referred to by the sages is very different. The picture on a motion picture screen is not the same as a picture painted on a canvas. The first is unreal, though it has the semblance of reality. It is merely projected on the screen and can be made to disappear by shutting off the light or removing the film. But the painted picture is real. It is a part of the canvas. In the same manner the bliss of spiritual realization, even if we look at it from the ordinary experience of happiness, cannot be altered. It never dulls with the passing of time but is something constant, until the supporting personality itself is destroyed.

Secondly, this realization is the result of work, and is an end attainable through a fixed course. The disciplines of yoga, mental and physical, culminate in this, as does the path of devotion, which ends finally with the overpowering love for God. The spiritual experience comes as a culmination of the efforts of the aspirant and is necessary to

give a meaning and purpose to what we do here on earth.

Some Christian mystics have referred to this experience as the discovery of the Christ within. Some said it was a rebirth, a new life, a manifestation of God or a total surrender of oneself to the Lord, who takes charge of the devotee and works out His will. Some have called it absorbed meditation or *Samadhi*, while others have described it as ecstasy or a beatific vision, a divine communion or a feeling of the divine presence. The variety of language and images used by different mystics gives no clue to understanding the process.

The nature of this experience will ever remain a sealed book, whatever may be said by different scholars. There is no possibility of connecting this intuitive, direct knowledge with the logical thinking of the mind. Those who insist that sense perception alone gives valid knowledge cannot have a correct estimate either of themselves or the outside world. This is the view of thinkers who use powers beyond the senses and arrive at inferential knowledge. Likewise, the man who has attained knowledge through insight finds that all other methods reveal knowledge far below the knowledge he gets. It is not a matter for argument. We can never argue with a blind man about the color of a rose, which does not exist for him. In view of this, Buddha never tried to describe the experience of Nirvana.

St. Theresa said, after such a knowledge, that her seeing God, whether it was correct or not, could not be explained. She could not of course recognize this as God because she had not seen Him before, but had only heard of Him. "Yet I could certainly affirm it, for though He remains unseen, so clear a knowledge is impressed upon the soul that to doubt it seems quite impossible. The Lord is pleased that this knowledge should be so deeply engraved upon the understanding, that one can no more doubt it than one can doubt the evidence of one's eyes—indeed, the latter is easier, for we sometimes suspect that we have imagined what we see. Whereas here, though the suspicion may arise for a moment, there remains such complete certainty that the doubt has no more force."

Ramakrishna told the doubting Vivekananda: "I have seen God. I see Him as I see you here, only more clearly."

God can be seen, but not with our eyes. We may not believe in any other eyes than these, yet we have to admit

that people for centuries have been speaking about such a wondrous state. The eyes are only instruments and the real seeing is done by the mind. When the mind is made tranquil, freed from all disturbing activities, it does not assert itself, but yields its place to something far superior to itself. Then a new life starts, where ignorance and desires become extinct and insight and calmness take their place. Everything connected with this life of ours is left once and for all, and we move to a region and state in which sorrows are removed forever. If it were only a temporary peace and state of joy, it would wear out and disappear. But it is a permanent state. Some have called the life after spiritual enlightenment the true and natural life of the soul, in comparison with which the ordinary life is a hypnotised one of darkness and illusion.

Although the process of enlightenment is hard to describe, it leaves its mark by the transformation brought to a person's character. The Hindus have often compared it to the transmutation of base metal to gold by the touch of the philosopher's stone. This process is not a gilding that wears off, but a total and complete alteration in the nature of the base metal. An iron sword becomes a golden sword, and gets the qualities of gold in all respects, yet keeps the outer shape. Now the sword's worth is not for its value as a weapon but for the precious metal it contains. It is no more valuable as a sword, because it has become soft. Likewise, the external man remains the same individual, but he has undergone an extraordinary transformation. His position in society is enhanced. The saint has become gentler and more worthy than all others. His value has gone up. This mark of the inner transformation alone should give us a proper evaluation of religion in our lives. Enlightenment has conferred upon him a unique freedom, the freedom of a liberated soul.

After such an experience, he loses all the tendencies that fetter a person to a life lived at the mercy of passions, attachments and hatred. The greeds and lusts that plague a human being are no longer present. The person who has been cruel and wicked does not have any more of those qualities. Ramakrishna used to illustrate this by saying that when the sword has become golden it cannot be used for cutting any more. In this state all the problems of life

and death are solved, all perplexing questions are answered, and doubts and anxieties cease forever. This brings to the person an extraordinary calmness preventing the manifestation of all conflicts.

We are told that enlightenment makes a man see the divinity around him. The harmony behind this divinity is clear and hence the man of realization becomes part of the universe and feels that he is in all and that all is in him. Enlightenment is often compared to a state of infinite expansion. The mind is liberated from its finite anxieties. When it has lost all of its distinctive and isolating marks, it becomes the possessor of new strength and new joy. "When passions are stilled and all worldly joys are silenced, then the word of God can be heard in the soul," said Meister Eckhart. The saints worked night and day to draw the attention of people to this new life, to the message of hope, the message that ends all suffering and brings indestructible joy and peace incomprehensible.

Up to now, no one has unfolded the meaning of this experience and explained it for intellectual understanding. But all have found that the change manifested in these people signifies something of extraordinary value. History has proved that they are worthy of being worshipped. For they have brought to humanity something which is in great and unique demand, and something which science has not been able to supply.

We have been observing the subject of spiritual enlightenment more in terms of its universal nature, as presented by great teachers, in order to point out that religions do show a man a way of attaining the highest values while living on earth. It is the saints who are the best representatives of a religion, not the codes or the creeds. Spiritual Enlightenment, the goal of religion, brings to us the true message of God with greater power and beauty. The demands may be great, but we get something in return which is beyond price.

"Thought is verily the world and therefore should be purified with care. As one's thought is, so one becomes; this is the eternal mystery."

— Upanishads.

Book Review

WATCHER ON THE HILLS, by Raynor C. Johnson; Harper, N.Y.,1960, 188 pp; $3.50

There are many aspects of life which as human beings living on a troubled planet we treat as serious challenges and to which we devote our energies in attempting to solve. No sooner is a solution found than another problem confronts us, or we seek one out ourselves. All of these have but a temporary and transient significance, as we know when we look back upon the passions and controversies that agitated us in previous stages of our life. Actually, in a final analysis, there is really only one problem we have to face: how to escape into the open air; how to break out of the natural condition in which we find ourselves, a condition of bondage to our senses and unregenerate desires, into a new state of being, or consciousness, in which we will discover our true nature, the hidden meaning of the world, and some immediate knowledge of God.

This is what we are always trying to do in prayer and meditation—and also when we climb a mountain, listen to a concert, write a poem, or fall in love. Constantly we are seeking something greater than ourselves: the divine Self that will break in upon our lives to unite and transform the dozens of warring, lesser selves that imprison us in recurrent conflict until divine Grace liberates us.

This quest is the spiritual life: the life of the spirit as opposed to the life of the senses and the flesh. In its higher reaches it is called mysticism.

It is this problem, to the exclusion of all others, that has captivated Raynor C. Johnson during much of his life. Mr. Johnson, a professor of physics at Melbourne University, is a deeply religious man but by his own account he has had no mystical experience. This makes his approach to the subject of mysticism and spiritual experience, which he regards as the most important aspect of life, all the more convincing and persuasive. His new book, just published, WATCHER ON THE HILLS, is a fascinating and instructive work and deserves a place beside James' VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE and Bucke's COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS. The title is taken from a letter of A.E. (George Russell):

"I believe the only news of any interest does not come from the

great cities or from the councils of state, but from some lonely watcher on the hills who has a momentary glimpse of infinitude and feels the universe rushing at him."

An arresting sub-title indicates wherein Mr. Raynor's book differs from most others in this field: *A Study of Some Mystical Experiences of Ordinary People*. The people whose experiences are presented to us are contemporaries from all walks of life, men and women, married and unmarried, and they are people living very much in the world we all know. There are thirty-six cases in all. Each provides us with a personal account, varying in length and in emphasis, of their mystical experience, including the background of their lives that preceded the experience and a suggestion of how their lives were radically altered as a result of it. Occasionally these testimonies rise to great heights—of beauty, profundity, intimacy—and leave an impression of wonder on the reader's mind. WATCHER ON THE HILLS is the kind of book which, from the standpoint of religious insight, is more valuable than a dozen treatises on religion.

Perhaps the most significant sentence in the book is this: "in most religions the ultimate verities are believed—and may therefore be doubted; in mysticism they are experienced, and doubt is no longer possible."

Elsewhere the author remarks: "At its heart, religion is mystical, in that it has to do with each soul's relationship to a higher spiritual order. The great religions of the world have generally collected the teachings of some spiritually advanced soul whose experience of this higher order has been intimate and at firsthand. The founders of the great religions have been mystics." Anyone who dismisses mysticism, therefore, dismisses the founder of his religion and allies himself with the materialist. He may believe in a religious doctrine or teaching—arrived at, let us remember, only after superconscious experience on the part of the prophet—but in reality he is closer to the materialist than the saint. With the materialist, his avoidance of the challenge of mysticism implies a belief in a world which only sense perceptions bring him.

WATCHER ON THE HILLS convinces us that a reality beyond the world of the senses exists, a divine reality whose essence is eternal joy, and that each of us in this life is able to contact it.

— *P.H.*

Book Review

THE GOLDEN HOARD, by Francis Merchant; Texas Southern University Press, Houston, Texas; 1959, 282 pp; $4.00.

Dr. Francis Merchant is a teacher of wide academic experience in this country; at present he is teaching at the University of Wisconsin. The work he is doing was brought to our attention recently with the arrival in our office of his latest book, THE GOLDEN HOARD. In the June issue of FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER we printed three pages of extracts from this work, which should suggest the nature of Dr. Merchant's commanding style of writing and the calm lucidity and discernment of his mind. THE GOLDEN HOARD clearly indicates that he is a valuable servant of the cause of Truth in our age.

We can state without qualification that anyone who reads this book can look forward to a rare, creative experience. But such a reader must be willing to stretch his mind in the process and to approach the subject matter with tolerance and complete honesty. It is not always an easy book to read, nor can it be read quickly. Further, we cannot recommend it to all of our readers. Only those of a philosophical leaning should seek it out, those with some knowledge of world religions, and those who have a continuing interest in the hidden truths that lie behind all the religious movements of history.

In a short space it would be impossible to do justice to the scope and essential purpose of this book, which is more true of THE GOLDEN HOARD than of any work we have reviewed here. But it is a book of enormous significance and consistent readability and should gain more attention than apparently it has enjoyed up to now. Once owned, it is the kind of book that one will turn to often over a long period. One can only wonder at the years of thought and preparation that must have preceded its writing, and the courage it took to sustain enthusiasm for the writing of so formidable a work. More importantly, one senses throughout that the author himself has travelled a long road of hard-won experience and spiritual travail and is driven to communicate the fruits of his knowledge to those traveling the same path.

He takes us on a tour of all the major cultures of history, with their myths and

symbols, their religions and philosophies, and their special contributions to the progress of the race. Each chapter is so concentrated that it could easily become the subject of a book in itself. Indeed, if there is any flaw in THE GOLDEN HOARD it is that it roams too far and in a sense is too much of a good thing.

Many interweaving themes engage his attention: the rich cultures of the Orient (to which, he says, we must now turn increasingly for perspective and wisdom, having depended long enough on the European heritage); the coming to earth of avatars, or God-men, whenever the light of spirituality grows dim and there is a disproportionate increase of sensuality and greed in human society; the therapeutic role of pain and suffering in human life; the profound truths that lie behind the origin of myths and legends; the basic lessons that each great scripture attempts to teach mankind; the rise and fall of empires; the reality of human brotherhood and the one-world consciousness; the necessity of meditation to uncover the world within; the hierarchy of enlightened souls who, though invisible, labor unceasingly in behalf of struggling humanity....

But one theme dominates the book and each of the others is seen to revolve about it as a focus: the slow, tortuous ascent of the soul through endless manifestations of matter to reach its true realm of illumination; its long, stupendous struggle to realize the truth of its own nature in all its blessedness and power. Dr. Merchant's dramatic projection of the soul's great journey through delusion, sloth and passion to its shining destiny is magnificent in its range. In elaborating this theme he makes an excellent case for reincarnation, or rebirth, declaring that one human birth (or one embodiment) would not provide nearly sufficient time for the soul, during its long pilgrimage, to realize itself and reach its goal of perfection; that in fact hundreds of lives are necessary.

THE GOLDEN HOARD is a greatly reassuring book. As long as such books continue to be written, as long as we are receptive to the truths they teach us and, each in our own fashion, carry forward the torch of spiritual enlightenment, we can preserve our hopes for humanity with a clear conscience and a calm conviction that in the end Truth will prevail. — P.H.

NOTICES and COMMENTS

WORLD PRAYER EFFORT. One of our friends pointed out recently that since all other agencies and programs have failed to bring men to peace and understanding with each other, prayer ought to be tried with greater energy than ever before, that indeed 'prayer may be our one remaining hope'. Dr. C. H. Yeang of 24 Cantonment Rd., Penang, Malaya, believes in this with great fervor. He has sponsored what he calls a World-wide Divine Love Radiation Service and spells his program out in eloquent detail in leaflets which he is distributing throughout the world at his own expense. To assist him in this crusade we have enclosed one of his leaflets in each copy of the August issue of FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, and more will be sent to churches and prayer groups around the country. Those who wish a larger number of these leaflets should write to us or to Dr. Yeang. Perhaps some of our readers would like to serve as distributing centers themselves for this noble undertaking....It is an uplifting thought to realize that as a result of Dr. Yeang's vision, tens of thousands, perhaps in time hundreds of thousands of people, for five designated minutes in the day, will be engaged in prayer simultaneously. If enough of us were able to do this for a long enough period, there is no telling what spiritual energies we might unleash upon a world that so sorely needs them. May the grace of God go with Dr. Yeang as he pursues his quest for universal love and human brotherhood, and with everyone who joins forces with him.

CHRISTIAN CENTURY ARTICLE. It has given us great pleasure to reprint in this issue significant portions of Deane W. Ferm's article, 'The Road Ahead in Religion', that first appeared in the May 25 issue of THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY. Those of our readers who appreciate this article will be happy to hear that Mr. Ferm's response to our request to reprint extracts from it, and to receipt of recent issues of FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER that we sent him, was highly affirmative and leads us to hope that he will write directly for us sometime soon... A later editorial by Harold E. Fey, editor of the CENTURY, relates something of the great stir that this article caused among CENTURY readers, the great majority of whom reacted with some vehemence to Mr. Ferm's viewpoint. This

was not unexpected perhaps. More important, we feel, is the fact that Mr. Fey had the courage and insight into our changing times to print this powerful article in the first place. We suggest that some of our own readers write Mr. Fey a letter of appreciation and gratitude, as we have done ourselves.

AUGUST ISSUE. We are encouraged to report that we had worthwhile material for a 32-page issue this month and for a time weighed an increase in the size of the publication to four more pages. (Our last such increase was in December 1958.) The considerable extra expense that will be involved in publishing the special December Anniversary Number, and printing 5,000 copies at that time, decided us against an increase just now. We hope to be able to undertake this next February....We were sorry we did not have space to print selections from the personal testimonies in WATCHER ON THE HILLS, reviewed on page 22, which would give the reader a taste of the unique quality of this important book. We will definitely do this in October and meanwhile we hope some of our readers have located the book for themselves...Carla Patsuris of New York City appears in FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER for the first time in this issue with her lovely poem, 'Fiat', appearing on page7. We are happy to have her with us.

NEW ADVISOR. A most enthusiastic newcomer to Fellowship in Prayer, Mrs. Kenneth B. Park of Laconia, N.H., has been named an advisor for the Eastern zone. Mrs. Park has been a teacher and free-lance writer and is active in various clubs and church activities in New Hampshire and in Florida, where she spends the winter. Her enthusiasm for our work and her understanding of its purpose make us feel very fortunate to enroll her and to gain the benefit of her services. We extend a cordial and appreciative welcome to her and look forward to a long association of mutual service.

RECOMMENDATION. Another outstanding publication has come to our attention—NEW OUTLOOK, 2865 West 9th St., Los Angeles 6, California. It is an impressive and stimulating monthly and ought to be more widely known. We suggest that interested readers write for a sample copy.

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A Father's Prayer

Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak—and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid. One who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, but humble and gentle in victory.

Build me a son whose wishes will not replace his actions, a son who will know Thee, and know that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge.

Send him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but in the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail. Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goal will be high—a son who will master himself before he seeks to master others.

One who will learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past—

And after all these things are his—this I pray—enough sense of humor that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously.

Give him humility so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.

Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, 'I have not lived in vain.'

— *Douglas MacArthur*

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